

“READY, AY, READY!”**NO. 2868****A SERMON****PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JANUARY 28, 1904****DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON****AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON
ON A THURSDAY EVENING, DURING THE WINTER OF 1861-62***“Ready to perish.”—Isaiah 27:13**“Ready to forgive.”—Psalm 86:5**“The graves are ready for me.”—Job 17:1*

WHEN attempting to prepare for this service, I found it impossible to fix my mind upon any one subject. This afternoon, I had to take rather a long journey to visit a friend who is sick unto death, and at his bedside I trust I have learned some lessons of encouragement, and have been animated by witnessing the joy and peace which God grants to His children in their declining hours.

Finding that I could not fix upon any one subject, I thought that I would have three. It may be that out of the three, there will be one intended by divine grace for a third of the audience, the second for another third, and the other for the rest, so that there will be a portion of meat in due season for all. You know, dear friends, that the motto of our navy is, “Ready, ay, ready!” That is something like my present subject, for I have three texts in which the word “Ready” occurs, each time in a different connection.

I. The first text will be especially addressed to those who are under concern of soul, having been led, by the enlightening influence of the divine Spirit, to see their state by nature, and to tremble in the prospect of their deserved doom. The text which will suit their case is in Isaiah 27:13, “READY TO PERISH.” “They shall come which were ready to perish.”

By nature, all men, whether they know it or not, are ready to perish. Human nature is, like a blind man, always in danger, nay, worse than that, it is like a blind man upon the verge of a tremendous cliff, ready to take the fatal step which will lead to his destruction. The most callous and proud, the most careless and profane, cannot, by their indifference or their boasting, altogether evade the apprehension that their state by nature, is alarming and defenseless. They may try to laugh it away from their minds, but they cannot laugh away the fact. They may shut their eyes to it, but they shall no more escape, by shutting their eyes, than does the silly ostrich escape from the hunter by thrusting its head into the sand.

Whether you will have it so, or no, fast young man in the dawn of your days—whether you will have it so, or no, blustering merchant in the prime of your age—whether you will have it so, or no, hardened old man in the petrified state of your moral conscience—it is so, you are ready to perish. Your jeers cannot deliver you, your sarcasms about eternal wrath cannot quench it, and all your contemptuous scorn and your arrogant pride cannot evade your doom, they do but hasten it.

There are some persons, however, who are aware of their danger, to them I speak. They are fitly described by the Spirit of God in these words of the prophet, “The great trumpet shall be blown, and they shall come which were ready to perish.” Having passed through this anguish myself, I think I can describe from experience, what some of you are now suffering.

You are ready to perish, in the first place, because *you feel sure that you will perish*. You did not think so once, but you do now. Once, you could afford to put away the thought, with a laugh, as a matter which might, or might not, be true, but anyhow, it did not much concern you. But now, you feel that you will be lost as surely as if it could be demonstrated to you by logic. In fact, the divine logic of the law has thundered it into your soul, and you know it. You feel it to be certain that you shall, ere long, be driven from the presence of God with that terrible sentence, “Depart, ye cursed.”

If any unbeliever should tell you that there is no wrath to come, you would reply, “There is, for I feel it is due me. My conscience tells me that I am condemned already, and ere long I am quite certain to drink of the wormwood and the gall of the wrath of God.” You have signed your own death-warrant, you have put on the black cap, and condemned yourself, or rather, you have pleaded guilty before your Judge, you have said, “Guilty, my Lord,” and now you think you see before your eye the scaffold and yourself ready to be executed.

You feel it to be so sure that you even anticipate the judgment day, you dreamed of it the other night, and you thought you heard the trumpet of the archangel opening all the graves, and wakening all the dead. You have already, in imagination, stood before the bar of God, you feel your sentence to be so certain that conscience has read it over in your hearing, and anticipated its terrors.

You are among those who are ready to perish, so permit me to say that I am glad you have come here, for this is the very spot where God delights to display His pardoning grace. He is ready to save those who are thus ready to perish. Those who write themselves down as lost are the special objects of our Savior’s mission of mercy, for “the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.”

You are ready to perish in another sense, for *you feel as if your perishing was very near*. You are like the dying man who gasps for breath, and thinks that each gasp must be his last, his pulse is feeble, his tongue is dry with feverish heat, the clammy sweat is on his brow. The valley of the shadow of death casts its gloomy shade on his pale cheeks, and he feels that he must soon die.

Is it not thus that some of you feel just now? You feel that you are coming near to the wrath of God. I have known the day when, as I lay down to rest, I dreaded the thought that, perhaps, I should never awake in this world, or at mid-day, I have walked in the fields, and wondered that the earth did not open, and swallow me up. A terrible noise was in my ears, my soul was tossed to and fro, I longed to find a refuge, but there seemed to be none, while ever ringing in my ears were the words, “The wrath to come!” “The wrath to come!” “The wrath to come!”

Oh, how vividly is the wrath to come pictured before the eyes of the awakened sinner! He does not look upon it as a thing that is to come in ten, twelve, or twenty years, but as a thing that may be before long, yea, even today. He looks upon himself as ready to perish because his final overthrow appears to be so close.

I am glad if any of you are in this plight, for God does not thus alarm men unless He has purposes of mercy concerning them, and designs for their good. He has made you fear you are perishing that you may have no perishing to fear. He has brought it home to you in this life that He may remove it forever from you in the life that is to come. He has made you tremble now that you may not tremble then. He has put before you these dreadful things that, as with a fiery finger, they may point you to Christ, the only refuge, and as with a thundering voice, they may cry to you, as the angels cried to Lot, “Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain, escape to the mountain, lest you be consumed.”

It may be that I am also addressing some, who not only realize the sureness and the nearness of their destruction, but *they have begun to feel it*. “Begun to feel it,” asks someone; “is that possible?” Yes, that it is, when day and night God’s hand is heavy upon us, and our moisture is turned into the drought of summer, we begin to know something of what a sinner feels when justice and the law are let loose upon him.

Did you ever read John Bunyan’s “Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners”? There was a man who had, even here, foretastes of the miseries of the lost, and there are some of us who can, even now, hardly look back to the time of our conviction without a shudder. I hope there is not a creature alive that has had deeper convictions than I had, or five years of more intolerable agony than those which crushed the very life out of my youthful spirit.

But this I can say, that terror of conscience, that alarm about the wrath of God, that intense hatred of past sin, and yet consciousness of my inability to avoid it in the future were such combinations of thought that I can only describe them in George Herbert’s words—

*“My thoughts are all a case of knives
Breaking my poor heart.”*

Oh, the tortures of the man who feels his guilt, but does not know the remedy for it! To look leprosy in the face, but not to know that it may be healed! To walk the leper-house, and hear that there is no physician there! To see the flame, but not to know that it can be quenched! To be in the dungeon, but never to know the rescue and deliverance!

O ye that are ready to perish, I sympathize with you in your present sufferings, but I do not lament them! This is the way in which God begins with those whom He intends to bless—not to the same degree in all, but yet after the same kind. He destroys our confidence in our own works, and then gives us confidence in Christ’s work.

You know how Bunyan describes Christian as being much tumbled up and down in his mind, and when his wife and children came round about him, he could only tell them that the city in which they lived was to be destroyed, and though his easy-going neighbors told him not to believe it, and not to make such a fuss about it, the truth had come home to him with too much power to be put away. Atheist might say it was all a lie, and Pliable might give slight heed to it, and pretend to believe it for a season, but Christian knew it to be true, so he ran to the wicket gate, and the cross, that he might escape from the wrath to come.

To the careless, these words, “Ready to perish,” should sound an alarm. May God the Holy Spirit, while I preach upon the second text, enable me to blow the great trumpet of the jubilee! May the gladsome sound reach the heart of him that is ready to perish! May he know that divine mercy brought him here that he might find a God ready to pardon!

II. My second text is in Psalm 86:5, “READY TO FORGIVE.”

Does not that ring like a silver bell? The other was a doleful note, like that of St. Sepulcher’s bell when it tolls the knell of a criminal about to be executed, “Ready to perish.” But this rings like a marriage peal, “Ready to forgive. Ready to forgive.” What does it mean when it says that God is ready to forgive?

“Ready” means, as you all know, *prepared*. A man is not ready to go by railway until his trunk is packed, and he is about to start. A man cannot be said to be ready to emigrate till he has the means to pay his passage, and the different things needed for his transit, and for his settling down when he gets to his destination. No road is ready till it is cleared, nothing is ready in fact, till it is prepared.

Sinner, God is ready to forgive, that is, everything is prepared by which you may be forgiven. The road used to be blocked up, but Jesus Christ has, with His cross, tunneled every mountain, filled every valley, and bridged every chasm, so that the way of pardon is now fully prepared. There is no need for God to say, “I would pardon this sinner, but how shall My justice be honored?”

Sinner, God’s justice has been satisfied, the sin of all who believe, or who ever will believe, was laid upon Christ when He died upon the tree. If you believes in Him, your sin was punished upon Him, and it was forever put away by the great atonement which He offered, so that now, the righteous God can come out of the ivory palace of His mercy, stretch out His hands of love, and say, “Sinner, I am reconciled to thee, be thou reconciled to me.”

*“Sprinkled now with blood the throne,
Why beneath your burdens groan?
All the wrath on Him was laid,
Justice owns the ransom paid.”*

In the case of the ancient Israelites, it was necessary that the sacrifice should be slain, and be burned upon the altar. So, the Divine Victim has been slain upon Calvary. Once for all, the sacrifice for sin has been offered by Jesus, accepted by the Father, and witnessed by the Holy Spirit. God is ready—that is to say, He is prepared—to forgive all who will believe in Jesus Christ.

You think that much preparation is needed on your part, but you are greatly mistaken. All things are ready, the oxen and the fatlings are killed, the feast is spread, the servants are sent with the invitations to the banquet, all you have to do, poor penitent, is to come and sit down, and eat with thankfulness to the great Giver of the feast. The bath is filled, O black sinner, so come and wash! The garment is woven from the top throughout, O ye naked, so come and put it on! The price is paid, O ye ransomed ones, so take your blood bought liberty! All is done. “It is finished,” rings from Calvary’s summit, God is ready to forgive.

But the word “ready” means something more than prepared, we sometimes use the term to indicate that *a thing can be easily done*. We ask, “Can you do such and such a thing?” “Oh, yes!” you reply, “readily.” Or perhaps we remind you of a promise you have given, and ask if you can carry it out, and you say, “Oh, yes! I am quite ready to fulfill my engagement.”

Sinner, it is an easy thing for God to forgive you. “Indeed,” say you, “but you don’t know where I was last night.” No, and I don’t want to know, but it is easy for God to pardon anybody who is not in hell. But you ask, “How can He do it? He speaks, and it is done. He has but to say to you, “Thy sins, which are many, are all forgiven,” and it is done. Pardon is an instantaneous work, justification is rapid as a lightning flash. You may be black one moment, and as white as alabaster the next, guilty—absolved, condemned—acquitted, lost—found, dead—made alive. It takes the Lord no time to do this, He does it easily.

O brethren, if He could make a world with a word, if He could say, “Let there be light,” and there was light—surely, now that Christ has offered up Himself as a bleeding sacrifice for sin, God has but to speak, and the pardon is given! As soon as He says, “I will; be thou clean,” the most leprous sinner is perfectly cleansed.

O sinner, will you not offer the prayer, “Save, Lord, or I perish?” Will you not ask the Lord to forgive you? Since He can so readily forgive, will you not cry, “Jesus, save me, or I die”? Stretch forth your hand, poor trembling woman up yonder, and touch the hem of His garment, and you shall be made whole, for He is ready to forgive, that is, He can do it with ease.

Again, the word “ready” frequently means *promptly* or *quickly*. In this sense also, God is ready to forgive. I know that some of you imagine that you must endure months of sorrow before you can be forgiven. There is no necessity that you should wait even another hour for this great blessing. After what I have been saying concerning the experience through which others have passed, some of you may fancy that you must be for four or five years floundering about in the Slough of Despond, but there is no need for you to do that. The plan of salvation is this, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.”

Let me give you a picture. Paul and Silas have been thrust into the inner prison at Philippi, and their feet made fast in the stocks. Though they have been brutally beaten, they are singing at midnight, singing of pardon bought with blood, singing of the dying and risen Lamb of God, and as they sing, suddenly there is an earthquake. The foundations of the prison shake, the doors fly open, and the jailer, fearing that his prisoners have escaped, leaps out, draws his sword, and is about to kill himself when he hears a voice crying, “Do thyself no harm; we are all here.” He calls for a light, springs in, and falls tremblingly at his prisoners’ feet, and says, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”

What would some of you have said in reply to that question? “Well, you must first believe the guilt of your sin more than you do at present, you had better go home, and pray about the matter.” That was not Paul’s answer, he said, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.” And to prove that he was saved, the apostle baptized him, and all his, straightway, and we are expressly told that they all believed.

What do you say to that, you old deacons, who say, as many country deacons still do, that the young converts ought to be “summered and wintered” before they are baptized? I have known scores of good old souls in the country, who have said, “We must not take Mrs. So-and-so into the church, we have not

had time to prove her enough.” But the apostle knew that as they had believed, they were fit to be baptized because they were pardoned.

*“The moment a sinner believes,
And trusts in His crucified God,
His pardon at once He receives,
Redemption in full through His blood.”*

If the Lord wills, you may be pardoned this very moment. JEHOVAH needs not months and years in which to write out the charter of your forgiveness, and put the great seal of heaven to it. He can speak the word, and swifter than the lightning flash the message shall come to you, “Thy sins, which are many, are all forgiven,” and you shall say, “I’m forgiven—

*“A monument of grace,
A sinner saved by blood;
The streams of love I trace
Up to the Fountain, God;
And in His sacred bosom see
Eternal thoughts of love to me.”*

The word “ready” is also frequently used to signify *cheerfulness*. When a person says to you, “Will you give me your help?” you say, “Oh, certainly, with readiness!” That means with cheerfulness. The Lord loves a cheerful giver, and I am sure that He is Himself a cheerful Giver. You do not know, poor soul, how glad God is when He forgives a soul.

The angels sang when God made the world, but we do not read that He sang then, yet in the last chapter of the prophecy of Zephaniah, we read, “The LORD thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing.” Only think of it—the Triune God singing! What a thought—the Deity bursting out into song! And what is this about? It is over His pardoned people, His blood bought chosen ones.

O soul, you think, perhaps, that God will be hard to be entreated, and that He will give His mercy grudgingly! But the mercy of the Lord is as free as the air we breathe. When the sun shines, it shines freely, else it were not the sun, and when God forgives, He forgives freely, else He were not God. Never did water leap from the crystal fount with half such freeness and generous liberality as grace flows from the heart of God. He gives forth love, joy, peace, and pardon, and He gives them as a king gives to a king. You cannot empty His treasury, for it is inexhaustible. He is not enriched by withholding, nor is He impoverished by bestowing.

Soul, you do libel Him when you think that He is unwilling to forgive you. I once had, as you now have, that hard thought of my loving Lord, that He would not forgive me. I thought He might, perhaps, do so one day, yet I could hardly think so well of Him as to believe that He would. I came to His feet very timidly, and said, “Surely, He will spurn me hence.” I supposed that He would say to me, “Get you gone, you dog of a sinner, for you have doubted my love.” But it was not so.

Ah! you should see with what a smile He received the prodigal, with what fond tenderness He clasped him to His breast, with what glad eyes He led him to His house, and with what a radiant countenance He set him by His side, at the head of the table and said, “Let us eat, and be merry: for this my son was dead, and is alive again: he was lost, and is found.”

I would that I could write upon every heart here, and engrave upon every memory, those sweet words, “Ready to forgive.” Are there any of you who do not want to be forgiven? The day will come when you will want this blessing. Sailor, are you in this building? Within a little while, you may be out upon the lonely sea, the waves may have swallowed up your vessel, and you may be clinging to just an oar. When the waters surge around you, how gladly you will remember that God is ready to forgive, but

how much better it would be to trust your soul to Him now! Some, whom I am now addressing, will probably die this week, I am not making a rash assertion, my statement is based upon the statistics of mortality. O soul, you say that it is nothing to you now, but when you are in the article of death—and that may be before another Sabbath’s sun shall rise—how might this note ring like music in your dying ears, “Ready to forgive”!

Am I speaking to some abandoned woman who thinks that she will destroy herself? See you do it not, for God is ready to forgive. Am I addressing some man who is cast out of society, as a reprobate for whom nobody cares? Soul, give not up hope, for God is ready to forgive. Though your father has shut the door against you, and your mother and sister shun you because of your vices and sins, yet God is ready to forgive you if you will repent, and turn from your iniquity.

Turn thee, turn thee, ’tis a brother’s voice that entreats you to turn. By the love with which He pardoned me, by the mercy which made Him pass by my innumerable transgressions, I beg you to turn, nay, more, linking my arm in yours, I say to you, “Come, and let us return unto the Lord, and let us say unto Him, ‘Receive us graciously, and love us freely, so will we render unto thee the calves of our lips.’” Ready to perish are you, but ready to forgive is He, blessed be His holy name!

III. My third text is intended as a hammer to drive home the last nail. This sentence, in Job 17:1, is most solemnly true of each one of us, “THE GRAVES ARE READY FOR ME.”

About three years ago I gazed into the eternal world. It then pleased God to stretch me upon a bed of the most agonizing pain, and my life hung in jeopardy, not merely every hour, but every moment. Eternal realities were vivid enough before my eyes, but it pleased God, for some purpose which is known to Him, to spare my life, and I went to spend a little season, that I might fully recover, with a beloved friend who seemed then far more likely to live than I was.

This day, it is his turn to lie upon the borders of the grave, and mine to stand by his bedside. The grave then seemed ready for me, it now seems ready for him. As I stood talking to him this afternoon, he said, with greater force than Addison, “See how a Christian can die.”

When I asked him about his worldly goods and possessions, he said that he had been content to leave them all, some time ago. “And what about your wife and your little ones?” I asked, and he replied, “I have left them all with God.” “And how about eternal things?” I inquired. “Oh!” said he, “you know that God’s love is everlasting and His grace is unchanging, so why should we fear?” He had no doubt about his acceptance in the Beloved, or about the power of Christ to carry him through his dying moments.

When I said, “The battle’s fought, the victory’s won forever,” I saw his eyes sparkle as though he heard the melodious voice of the great Captain of our salvation saying to him, “Well done; enter into thy rest.” I never saw a bride at her marriage look happier than this man upon the eve of death. I never saw a saint more peaceful when retiring at eventide, than he was when about to undress himself that he might stand before his God. “Ah!” he exclaimed, “remember what you said to me, ‘Sudden death, sudden glory!’” and his eyes sparkled again at the prospect of soon beholding his Lord.

“One gentle sigh, the fetter breaks,”—

and you are gone, O earth, and my soul is in heaven! One gasp and you have melted, O shadowy Time, and I have come to you, you welcome substance of Eternity! Blessed be God that the graves are ready for us. Christian men, does the idea of a long life charm you? Do you want to remain long in this prison? Would you cling to these rags of mortality, to this vile body, whose breath is corrupt, whose face is so often marred with weeping, and upon whose eyelids hangs the shadow of death? Would you long to creep up and down this dunghill world, like some poor worm that ever leaves a slimy track behind it? Or would you not rather—

*“Stretch your wings, O soul, and fly
Straight to yonder world of joy”?*

Were we wise, we should—

*“Long for evening, to undress,
That we might rest with God.”*

“The graves are ready for me.” Young men and young women, and all of you who are here, can you look upon the grave which is ready for you with as much complacency as my friend did this afternoon?

O Death, you do not need to furbish up your darts, or whet your scythe! You are always ready to slaughter the sons of men. O Eternity, your gates need not to be unlocked, and thrown back on their hinges with long and tedious toil, for they are ever on the jar! O world to come, you do not need long intervals to make yourself ready to receive the pilgrims who have finished their journey! You are an inn whose doors are always open, you are a harbor whose gates are never closed.

Our grave is ready for us. The tree is grown that shall make our coffin, perhaps the fabric that shall make our winding sheet is already woven, and they, who will carry us to our last home, are ready and waiting for us.

“The graves are ready for us,” are we ready for the graves? Are we prepared to die—prepared to rise again—prepared to be judged—prepared to plead the blood and righteousness of Christ as our ground of acceptance before the eternal throne? What is your answer, my hearer? Do you reply, in the words I quoted at the beginning of my discourse, “Ready, ay, ready”? Did you say, Death, that I was wanted? Here I am, for you did call me. Did you say, O Heaven, that you need to receive another blood bought one? “Ready, ay, ready!”

O Christian men, always keep your houses in such good order that you will always be “Ready, ay, ready!” Always keep your heart in such a state, your soul so near to Christ, and your faith so fully fixed on Him, that if you should drop dead in the street, or some accident should take away your life, you would be able to cheerfully say, “Ready, ay, ready! Ready for you, O Death, ready to triumph over you, and to pluck away your sting! Ready for you, O Grave, for where is now your victory? Ready for you, O Heaven, for with your wedding garment on, we are ready, ay, ready!” The Lord make us ready, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

MATTHEW 8:1-27

Verse 1-2. *When he was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed him. And, behold, there came a leper—*

You see that particular mention is made of this one special case, and in any congregation, while it may be recorded that so many people came together, the special case that will be noted by the recording angel will be that of anyone who comes to Christ with his own personal distresses, and who thereby obtains relief from them, “Behold, there came a leper”—

2-3. *And worshipped him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou can make me clean. And Jesus put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.*

His faith was not as strong as it might have been. There was an “if” in it, but still, it was genuine faith, and our loving Lord fixed His eye upon the faith rather than upon the flaw that was in it, and if He sees in you, dear friend, even a trembling faith, He will rejoice in it, and bless you because of it. He will not withhold His blessing because you are not as strong in faith as you should be. Probably, you will have a greater blessing if you had greater faith, but even little faith gets great blessings from Christ. The leper said to Him, “If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean,” so Christ answered to the faith that he did possess, “and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.”

4-7. *And Jesus said unto him, See thou tell no man; but go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.*

And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto him a centurion, beseeching him, and saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented. And Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him.

He had not asked Christ to “come and heal him.” He wished his servant to be healed, but he considered that it was too great an honor for Christ to come to him. I am not sure, but I think that this man’s judgment is correct—that for Christ to come to a man is better than for healing to come to him. Indeed, brethren and sisters, all the gifts of Christ fall far short of Himself. If He will but come, and abide with us, that means more than all else that He can bestow upon us.

8-9. *The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed. For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it.*

From his own power over his soldiers and servants, he argued that Christ must have at least equal power over all the forces of nature, and as a centurion did not need to go and do everything himself, but gave his orders to his servant, and he did it, so, surely, there could be no need for the great Commander, to whom he was speaking, to honor the sick man with His own personal presence. He had simply to utter the command, and it would be obeyed, and the centurion’s servant would be healed.

Do you think this is an ingenious argument? It is so, certainly, but it is also a very plain and very forcible one. I have read or heard many ingenious arguments for unbelief, and I have often wished that half the ingenuity thus vainly spent could be exercised in discovering reasons for believing. So, I am pleased to notice that this commander of a hundred Roman soldiers did but argue from his own position, and so wrought in his mind still greater confidence in Christ’s power to heal his sick servant. Is there not something about yourself, dear friend, from which, if you would look at it in the right light, you might gather arguments concerning the power of the Lord Jesus Christ?

10. *When Jesus heard it, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.*

“Not in Israel”—where the light and the knowledge were, there was not such faith as this centurion possessed. This Roman soldier, rough by training and experience, who was more familiar with stern fighting men than with those who could instruct him concerning Christ, had more faith than Jesus had so far found “in Israel.”

11-12. *And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*

This is a strange thing, yet it is continually happening still, despite its strangeness, that the persons who are placed in such positions of privilege, that you naturally expect that they would become believers, remain unbelievers, while others, who are placed at a terrible disadvantage, nevertheless often come right out from sin, and right away from ignorance, and become believers in Christ. Oh, that none of us, who sit under the sound of the Gospel from Sabbath to Sabbath, might be sad illustrations of this truth, while others, unaccustomed to listen to the Word, may be happy instances of the way in which the Lord still takes strangers, and adopts them into His family.

13. *And Jesus said unto the centurion, Go your way; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee. And his servant was healed in the selfsame hour.*

Jesus will treat all alike according to this rule, “As thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee.” If you can believe great things of Him, you shall receive great things from Him. If you think Him good, and great, and mighty, you shall find Him to be so. If you can conceive greater things of Him than anyone else has ever done, you shall find Him equal to all your conceptions, and your greatest faith shall be surpassed. It is a law of His kingdom, from which Christ never swerves, “According to thy faith, be it unto thee.”

14-15. *And when Jesus was come into Peter's house, he saw his wife's mother laid, and sick of a fever. And He touched her hand, and the fever left her: and she arose, and ministered unto them.*

That was, perhaps, the most remarkable thing of all, for when a fever is cured, it usually leaves great weakness behind it. Persons recovered of fever cannot immediately leave their bed, and begin at once to attend to household matters, but Peter's wife's mother did this. Learn, hence, that the Lord Jesus can not only take away from us the disease of sin, but all the effects of it as well. He can make the man, who has been worn out in the service of Satan, to become young again in the service of the Lord, and when it seems as if we never, even if converted, could be of any use to Him, He can take away the consequences of evil habits, and make us into bright and sanctified believers.

What is there that is impossible to Him? In the olden time, kings claimed to have the power of healing with a touch. That was a superstition, but this King can do it, all glory to His blessed name! May He lay His gracious hand upon many of you, for if it could heal before it was pierced, much more can it now heal every sin-stricken soul it touches.

16-18. *When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses.*

Now when Jesus saw great multitudes about him, he gave commandment to depart unto the other side.

For He neither loved nor courted popularity, but did His utmost to shun it. It followed Him like His shadow, but He always went before it, He never followed it, or sought after it, “When Jesus saw great multitudes about Him, He gave commandment to depart unto the other side.”

19. *And a certain scribe came, and said unto him, Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.*

How bold he is with his boasting! But Jesus knows that the fastest professors are often just as fast deserters, so He tests him before He takes him into the band of His followers.

20. *And Jesus saith unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.*

Christ means—“Can you follow the Son of man when there is no reward except Himself—not even a place for your head to rest upon, or a home wherein you may find comfort? Can you cleave to Him when the lone mountain side shall be the place where He spends whole nights in prayer while the dews fall heavily upon Him? Can you follow Him then?” This is a test of love which makes many to be “found wanting.”

21-22. *And another of his disciples said unto him, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. But Jesus said unto him, Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead.*

It must be Christ first, and father afterwards. We pay no disrespect to our dearest relatives and friends when we put them after Christ, that is their proper place. To put them before Christ, to prefer the creature to the Creator, is to be traitors to the King of kings. Whoever may come next, Christ must be first.

23-26. *And when he was entered into a ship, his disciples followed him. And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves: but he was asleep. And his disciples came to him, and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish. And he saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm.*

Probably no calm is so profound as that which follows the tempest of the soul which Jesus stills by His peace-speaking word. The calm of nature, the calm of long-continued prosperity, the calm of an easy temper—these are all deceitful, and are apt to be broken by sudden and furious tempests. But after the soul has been rent to its foundations—after the awful ground swell, and the Atlantic billows of deep temptation—when Jesus gives peace, there is “a great calm.”

27. *But the men marvelled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him!*

We have often marveled in the same way, but we know that it is not any “manner of man” alone, but that He, who was truly man, who was also “very God of very God,” the God-man, the man Christ Jesus, the Mediator between God and men.

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